The Morning Breath of June

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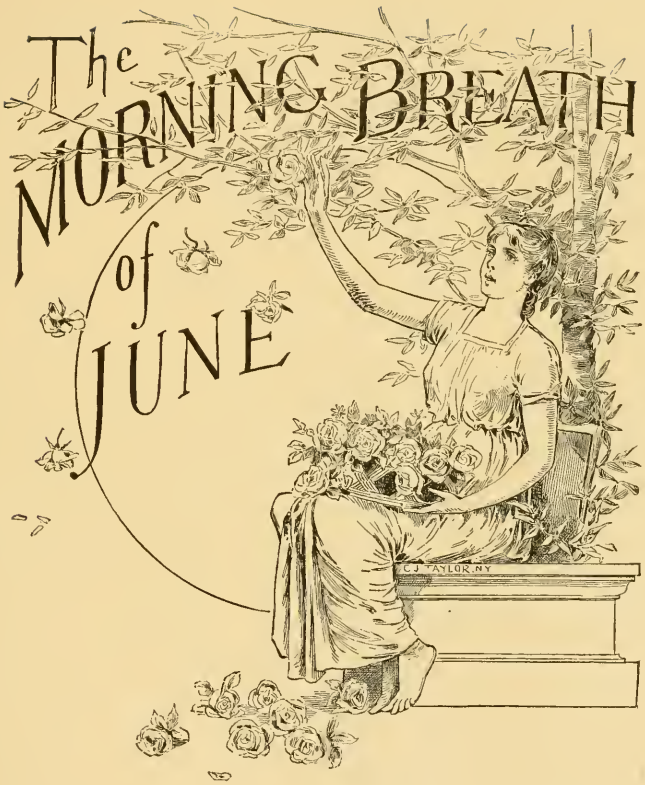

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THE MORNING BREATH OF JUNE.

A POEM.

ILLUSTRATED BY

C. J. TAYLOR AND E. J. MEEKER.

A. NEWMAN LOCKWOOD,

NEW YORK.

1884.

To those whose Contributions
have Enabled the Poor of
the City to breathe the
Summer air of Forest,
Field and Sea, the
Author dedicates this
book.
June 1884

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The Morning Breath of June.

THERE is a mount upon an island home,
That feels at once the influence of each zone;
Its towering greatness shadows neighbor isles,
And Winter chills, while round it Summer smiles.
Its crest is frigid in eternal snow,
Its swelling breasts with temperate fruits o'erflow,
While its broad base, the naked native's home,
Broils in the summer of a torrid zone.

HAPPY our land, where all the seasons range,
Where blest and strengthened by successive change
We do not envy in his hut of snow,
The dreamless slumber of the Esquimaux;
Nor the proud Turk to lust and luxury bound
By circling summers in their endless round.
Happy our land, the broad Atlantic's door,
Opens to usher in the changing four—
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter; and again
A repetition of the varied train.
In smiles and tears, sunshine and shower doth bring
Bulbs to the birth couch of prolific spring;
And bulbs and buds to flowering fruits expand,
Building a Heaven within our summer land:

"Its towering greatness shadows neighbor isles,
And winter chills, while round it summer smiles."

And Summer's treasures Autumn's lap doth hold,
Till, by her magic they are changed to gold;
When fruit-cloyed nature, surfeited to death,
Gains her new life from Winter's bracing breath.
Each has his favorite season.
Weather epicures may name
May or September, and assert their claim;
Lovers' and poets' harps are most attune
When thou hast touched them;
Morning Breath of June.

WHERE'ER the sun or moon doth range,
Twixt the low Earth or vaulted Heaven,
God hath a medium of exchange,

"Gains her new life from winter's bracing breath"

To mortals and immortals given.

The currency of day is gold,

Displayed in beams of light;

Swift passing through a different mould,

Silver's the coin of night.

'TIS night! The amorous God of day

From earth hath turned his face away,

While silence with the darkness creeps

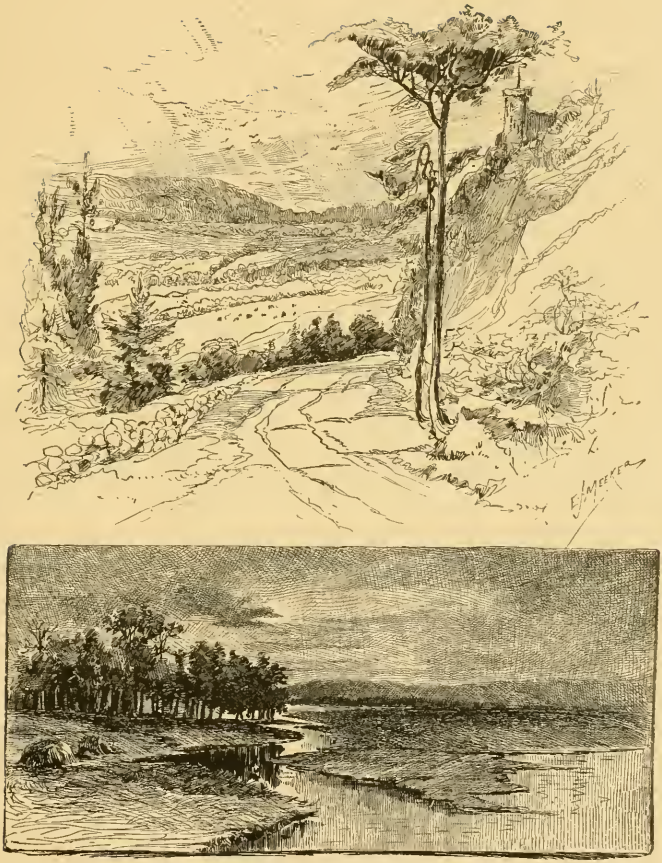
O'er labor-resting man;

The lonesome Heaven above him weeps,

Lamenting day's short span.

A thirsty earth drinks tears of dew,

Yet generously leaves a few



"The currency of day is gold, displayed on beams of light;
Swift passing through a different mould silver's the coin of night."

On blades of grass, on violet's head, in lily's cup;

Nature to nature kind, it knew

That a returning morrow's sun,

Swift traveling to the heat of noon,

In thirst, at need, would take them up.

THE Morning Breath of early June

Rose sweet from meadows full in bloom;

Like spice barque on the Indian seas,

'Twas caught and carried by the breeze,

'Twas wind–wooed, till at length it broke

Upon the city's distant towers,

To mingle with the dust and smoke;

Its airy skirmishers stray in

"On blades of grass, on violets head, in lily's cup."

The drear abodes of want and sin.

Unbidden guest of rich and poor,

Essence of joy and health,

Flood through the casement and the door,

Unpurchasable wealth!

Then break again with blessings full

Upon the noxious hospital:

Impatient nurse, so swift to seek

And kiss the exhausted sleeper's cheek,

To fan away the fever breath,

To check the clammy sweat of death;

Till lost in atmosphere so rare,

The breather dreams 'tis childhood's air;

His trooping thoughts go wandering back

"The morning breath of early June,
Rose sweet from meadows full in bloom."

Across life's winding desert track.

All present troubles are forgot,

While memory revels in that dearest spot—

Ambition cares no more to roam.

His ward is Heaven, his couch is home.

Great non-respecter, ever thus

Breathe thou on purity and lust,

Baptize the just and the unjust.

THE nun, whose days and nights are spent

In prayers and vigils long,

Steps from her cell at dawn, to hear

The church bells' matin song.

Why are their songs at morning time

"Twas wind wooed till at length it broke,
Upon the city's distant towers,
To mingle with the dust and smoke."

Purer than vespers' softer chime?

Why does she morn's delight to hear?

Why are they sweeter to her ear?

Is it because in morning gray

They carol birth of holy day,

While at the eve in mournful strain

They toll its funeral dirge again?

Yes; 'tis thy Morning Breath, O June,

That sets them to a different tune;

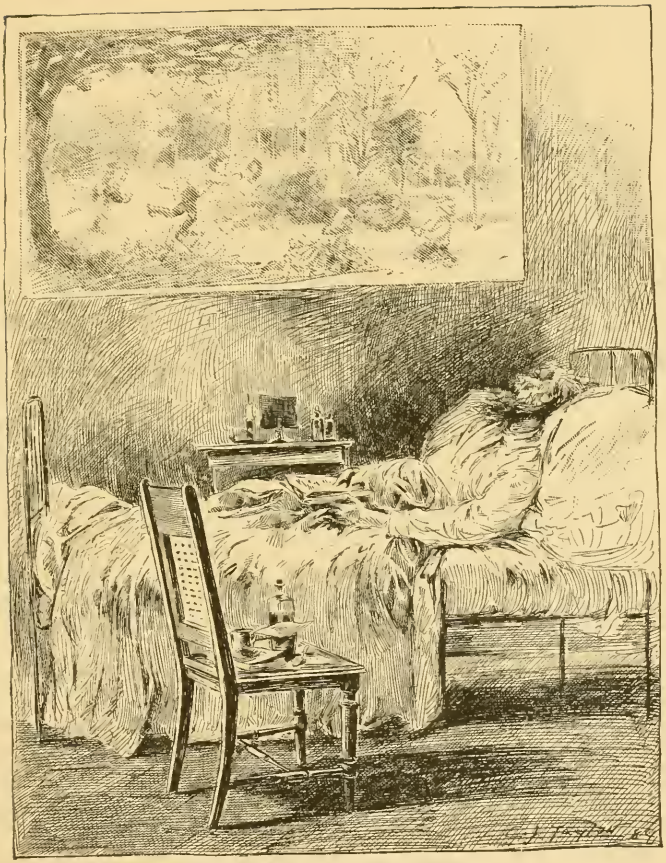
Bathed in its atmosphere of balm,

They sing to her a holier psalm;

Thy virgin perfume fills their lungs,

Its freshness swells their throats,

Its kisses tip



"The breather dreams 'tis childhood's air,"

Each brazen lip,

Its moisture wets their iron tongues,

Changing their very notes.

DID fairies, with discretion rare,

Compound thy tinctures in the air?

Was it thy breath, so soft and cool,

Troubled Bethesda's sacred pool?

Made its calm breast for man to heave,

And all his pangs and pains relieve?

Its passive bosom for him feel?

The malady of sin to heal?

COULD we, like Joshua, at will

Bid the red marker of the day

"Steps from her cell at dawn to hear,
The church bells matin song."

To stay his march, and stand as still

As the fixed stars that line his way—

Then might we, Morning Breath of June,

Retain thy presence and perfume—

In early morn's perpetual glow

Maintain a rival heaven below.

I love to trace the doubtful dates

Of deeds for heaven done,

Back to this month, and say they were

Born of June's breath and sun.

Above all creeds, to angel deeds

Man's quickened spirit soars,

"While at the eve in mournful strain,
They toll its funeral dirge again."

When June's Morn–Breath, floods wood and heath,

And through his being pours.

IF bold Leander had essayed in June

To cross thy wave, thou treacherous Hellespont,

I think its breath, essence of life in bloom,

Through surging waters safe had borne him up,

To let possession, with its holy fire,

To summer, change his winter of desire:

Nor could cold element, nor jealous Jove,

Gain such a victory over venturing love.

Perchance 'twas June. What mortal can gainsay?

Perhaps the witchery of her winning breath

Lit passion-fires that slumbering in him lay,

"Could we like Joshua, at will bid the red marker of the day
To stay his march and stand as still."

And impulse drove him to his fated death.

Heroes of love! upon their grave to-day

June's breath doth nourish laurel trees and bay.

Let envious deities of sea and grove,

Charge not on June such crime 'gainst human love.

June was not witness to their death;

No sensuous odors to despoil her breath,

Welled from the honeyed sips

Of the pale Hero, when she lay

Beneath the wave, and kissed away

Her life upon his lips.

JUNE is the Breath of love—

A paradox I state;

Sometimes its wings fling venomed stings,

And then 'tis murderous hate.

On sixteenth morn, it fired

The soul of Marshal Ney;

Reckless of life to hopeless fight

Round Quatre Bras all day.

Before the seventeenth sun

Had pierced the morning mists,

That like concealing shroud, still hung

Above the awful lists—

'Twas June's Morn Breath that came

And rent the veil in 'twain,

To find its victims slain.

Wave after wave, through wood, o'er plain,

Reluctantly the sweet breath came.

It came, but could not stay;

Yet stooped and kissed those that were missed

At bugle-call next day.

ON field of sorrow, death, and strife;

Rest, breath of peace, and joy, and life;

It came, but left them there,

In the unchanging state—

Their faces black with hate;

Locked in each other's arms, dissembling love,

It left them there—

The bare-kneed Highlander, and mail-clad Cuirassier.

"Nor could cold element nor jealous Jove,
Gain such a victory over venturing love."

GEM of the summer! thy repentant breath
Consoles the widow in the toil of years:
Thy softest balm shall heal the wounds of death,
Aided by time, has dried the orphan's tears.

BREATH of Deceit! thy aromatic gales,
In early Junes filled fabled voyagers' sails,
Till the lured Sinbads, by its suasions moved,
Turned prows to pleasure, and lent helms to love;
Threw to the sea safe compass and sure chart,
And far away from useful labor's mart,
Drifted to shallows, where, from distance dim,
The coyest sirens send enticing hymn,
Chase the swift mermaids as they swimming play,

"On sixteenth morn it fired the soul of Marshal Ney,
Reckless of life to hopeless fight round Quartre Bras all day."

Whose eyes are guide-lights, and whose path–the way.

Grudging the future of the bliss it stores,

Aid languid breezes with impatient oars.

Thy sensuous zephyrs promise them delights—

Arcadian groves, and Brandan's fairy sights.

Blind with desire, unheeding how they steer,

See not the Scylla and Charybdis near:

Deaf for all senses, in one passion lost,

Hear not the breakers thundering on the coast;

Till hand of Satan, rising from the deep,

Hurls their frail barques against the stormy steep,

'Mid other wrecks that sailed some fair June day,

And left discretion's rules for passion's sway:

While sorrowing sea-nymphs, rising from their caves,

"Locked in each others' arms dissembling love, it left them there."

To marble whiteness, lash contending waves
There ever lie, fit monuments to prove
That lustful pleasure is not heaven-blest love.

THE pale consumptive, thinks the Breath of June
Shall to his cheek restore health's vanished bloom;
In anxious hope how doth his soul expand;
Anticipation scents its zephyrs bland.
Poor child of suffering, it, by God's command,
Shall bear thee quickly to a better land,
Where living flowers in endless glory bloom,
Whose only season is the morn of June.
There is no winter there,
Nor fickle spring,

"Drifted to shallows, where from distance dim,
The coyest sirens send enticing hymn."

Nor autumn of decay;

For June's warm breath

Doth banish death,

From the eternal day.

PROPHETIC Breath, laden with Eden balm,

It came each morn' to break the sinless calm

Of Eve's soft slumbers.

And when the angel, with the flaming sword,

Drove the first pair from presence of the Lord,

It followed them;

And once each year it comes

To cheer Eve's children in their earthly homes:

To fan thy flame, Remembrance,

"Mid other wrecks that sailed some fair June day,
And left discretion's rules, for passion's sway."

And bid the meek to hope;

When earth to heaven is changed,

When sinless man hath Paradise regained,

'Twill be this lost inheritance.

FIRST-BORN of summer, daughter of the Sun!

Thou wert the cause when woman was undone;

It was thy breath and blandishments alone

That led her willing captive from her throne.

The Amazons, at least so legends say,

Held their men-captives till the month of May,

And after pairing, did their victims slay.

But waiting once till June had spread her charms,

They lingered captives in their captives' arms.

"And when the angel with the flaming sword,
Drove the first pair from presence of the Lord,
It followed them."

THE changeless iceberg, anchor-locked and fast,

Moored to its place through ages that are past,

So many winters down its slopes have run,

Resists with ease, the influence of the sun,

Till loosed at last by some chance polar gale,

For tropic seas majestically shall sail;

Feel June's soft land breeze,

Fresh from blossomed trees,

Turn to pure crystal,

Melt to swell the seas.

So doth Thy Breath change selfish human hearts;

Turns thoughts from self, benevolence imparts.

Released from self, e'en coldest natures prove

They have no weapon 'gainst thy clasp of love.

"They lingered captives in their captives arms."

LOV'ST thou a maid

That long has held her heart

Beyond the reach of any gallant's art?

Press not thy suit at marriage feast, or ball;

Distracted beauty will not heed Love's call

When eyes more dazzling than the jewels bright

Flash back on torches a surpassing light;

When the deep flagon and plethoric bowl

Fill with false fancies elevated soul,

Nor in the mazes of the mystic dance,

E'en Cupid's darts there often fly askance;

Nor at day's acme seek secluded bower,

For the high noon is not Love's promised hour.

Trust not thy fortune in the serenade—

Night is the time for contemplation made.

Ask her to walk with thee on June's first morn,

Just when, in glory, summer's month is born;

Like Eve and Adam, wander hand in hand

Through glistening gardens Shenstone might have planned;

O'er rustic bridge that spans the mimic flood,

Down where the by-paths interlace the wood,

Where feathered choristers from bush and sod,

Warble a chorus to a listening God.

There in His temple, boldly then and there,

In holy confidence repeat Love's prayer;

The long resisting-one shall grant the boon:

A conquering ally is the Breath of June.

REMAINING fragrance of May's violet tomb,
Brooding o'er summer's earliest bloom,
From grassy altars ever rise
Accepted incense to the skies.
Delicious Breath, can all the amorous East
Thy power augment, thy Heavenly wealth increase?
Can all the spies of Arabia rare,
Add to the sweetness of thy summer air?
Precious as ointment that ran down
From Aaron's beard to Aaron's gown;
Odorous as ointment woman showered
Upon the head of Christ the Lord;
Estrayed from Eden, ever drift
With us, round us, priceless gift.

"When eyes more dazzling than the jewels bright."

THE scarlet woman—

God erase her crime—

Drops on dishonored couch at morning time,

Worn with the revels of the masking night:

Her painted cheek shuns day's disclosing light.

She sleeps—

From Mercy's wings the Breath of June

Through broken pane drifts in and fills the room.

She dreams of happier hours before she fell;

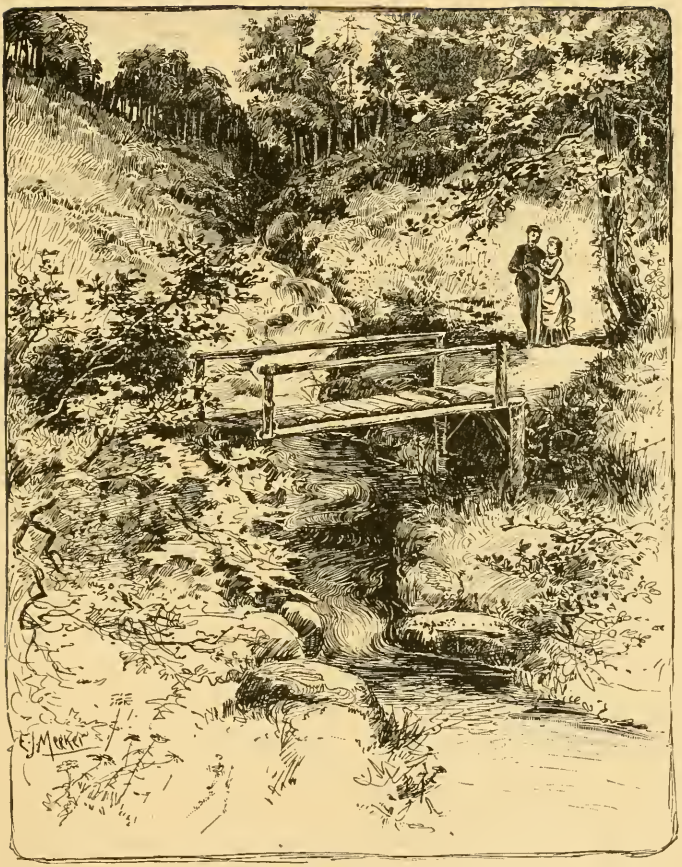
She stands another woman at the well:

On pastures new her pardoned soul hath burst,

One bids her drink and never after thirst.

Long, and in vain, shall lecherous passer-by,

Look to her house for beckoning hand and eye,



"O'er rustic bridge that spans the mimic flood,
Down where the by-paths interlace the wood."

While chaster sisters, with a demon's scorn,

Point her to Hell, and bar her from reform.

Shake the contiguous dust from off their feet,

Gather their skirts and leave her in the street.

Forgive her! 'tis her woman spirit cries

To Heaven, appealing from this sacrifice.

Forgive her! 'tis her woman's spirit dies

Upon thy altar, custom's sacrifice.

Carry her prayer to God, sweet Breath of June,

For penitents, at least in Heaven, there's room.

PERFECTED Breath! the time shall come when men,

Weary of sin, shall turn to Heaven again.

In human hearts no evil shall have birth,

"Where feathered choristers fro n bush and sod,
Warble a chorus to a listening God."

For the just meek shall reap the rolling earth;
Nor Babel's head, again o'er Shinar tower
To mock the mercy of a Saviour's power;
But all mankind, one people with one tongue,
To the Messiah, raise a welcoming song:
And a glad earth Thy breath and garb resume
In royal robes receive Him—Final June!

PERPETUAL Breath, did not the Hand divine
Set June first month upon the wheel of time?
Perpetual June, shall not Thy Morn-Breath stay
When time and seasons shall have passed away?

IN that last morning, whose unbounded light
Shall see no noon, no sunset, and no night;

"Worn with the revels of the masking night,
Her painted cheek shuns day's disclosing light,"

In that last morning when, in every clime,
Eternal power shall stop the wheels of time,
And check the busy seasons as they run—
T'will halt the earth beneath June's morning sun.
Of day eternal June shall be the soul;
And spread its sweetness even to the pole:
Sahara's desert, June's bright green shall wear,
And Iceland's mountains June's red rose shall bear.
No fickle spring shall ever weep again,
Nor for earth's fountains winter forge a chain.
No hot July shall imitate its bloom,
Nor scorching August wither with its noon;
Nor autumn's breath prepare for winter's tomb,
That heavenly beauty, that is only June.

"Carry her prayer to God sweet Breath of June."

ONCE I ascended in a ship of air,
To find the boundary where conjunction's made;
To find what part of Thee is earth so rare,
What part from Heaven had strayed.
But I descended soon, for mortal cannot find
Where earth leaves off, where Heaven to earth is joined.

FAREWELL! thou fairest of the rosy train;
We know sweet Breath, thou'lt visit us again—
Good-by! another month with youth elate
Ambitious blushes at day's Eastern gate;

"A thousand times" Good-by.

While peering hope, and sad regret,
In every heart doth cry,
Like Juliet from her balcony,
"A thousand times," Good-by!

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